

# Impact SPOTLIGHT

April 2026, Issue 6

## Advancing Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Legislation at the State Level: The Impact of Advocacy Action Days

### The Challenge

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the U.S., highlighting the need for effective prevention strategies and public policies. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) policy and advocacy work bridges the gap between what communities need and the actions policymakers can take to prevent suicide. Each year between January and May, AFSP chapters host **Advocacy Action Days** (AAD) in state capitals across the country. These events empower participants to engage directly with state lawmakers and their staff to share their personal stories and talk about how we can and must work together to prevent suicide. Due in part to these efforts, **28 AFSP-supported state bills** were signed into law in 2025.

**Connect with your chapter** to learn about your state's AAD event and become a Volunteer Advocate at [afsp.org/advocate](https://afsp.org/advocate).

Measuring impact – by collecting and leveraging data in strategic and thoughtful ways – plays a critical role in ensuring that we achieve real results with the actions we take, programs we produce, and partnerships and initiatives we embark on in our quest to prevent suicide and provide support to those affected.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Impact Spotlight series takes a look at some of the ways we're making a true difference in communities everywhere.



### Key Takeaways

1. Over 1,600 Volunteer Advocates attended 45 AAD events across the country in 2025.
2. Most (94%) of AAD participants learned something new, and nearly all (98%) would recommend the event to others.
3. Nearly all (99%) participants intend to take action after attending an AAD event, including encouraging others to advocate and continuing to engage with their public officials.

## Taking Action

Together with our chapter network, AFSP conducted a robust evaluation of AAD events to assess the program's reach and impact across the country.

Using data collected between January and May 2025 across events held in 45 states, our evaluation helped us to:

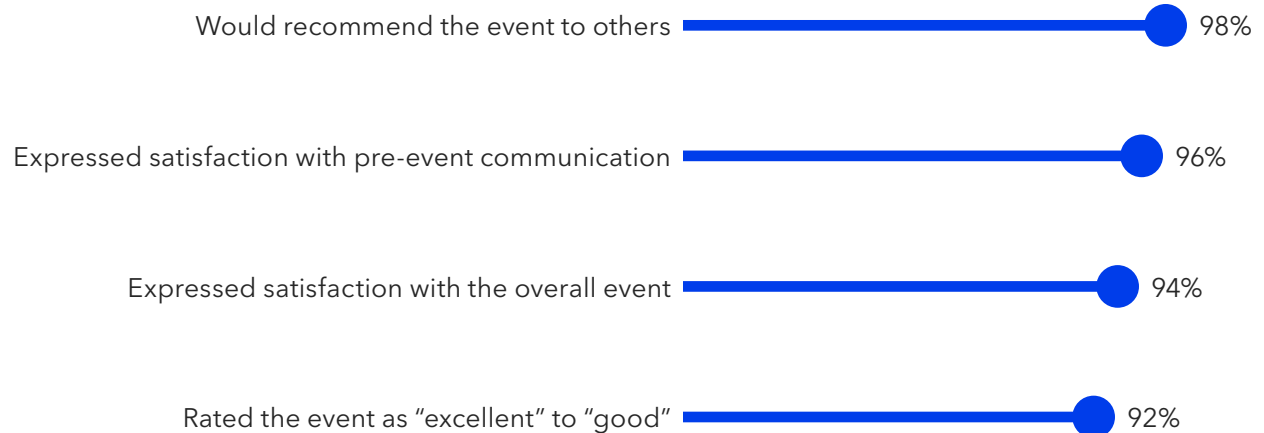
- Assess the effectiveness of AAD events in helping to increase participants' knowledge about suicide prevention advocacy, inspire future advocacy actions, and empower advocates to share their stories to advocate for change
- Use participant feedback to improve future events

By implementing a comprehensive evaluation strategy, we ensure our events are meeting community needs and reaching intended audiences.

## Who Was Involved

1,622 people participated in 45 AAD events in 2025. Based on participant survey responses from 38 states, half (50%) were first-time participants, with the other half having attended one or more AAD events in the past (N=181).

**Nearly all participants had a positive perception of the AAD events and would recommend them to others (N=175).**



**76%**

of participants were women, while 22% were men, and 2% were nonbinary or gender diverse (N=144)



**47%** of participants were ages 35-54

**83%** of participants were Caucasian/White

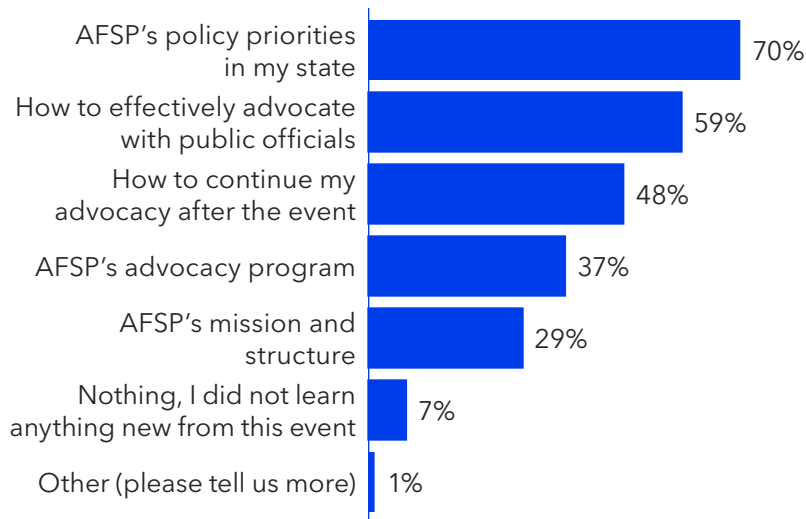
**78%** of participants had a Bachelor's degree or higher

Note: 'N' refers to the total number of people who responded to that particular question.

## What We Found

Our evaluation found that AAD events are effective in achieving their intended outcomes of increasing participants' understanding of AFSP's advocacy program and policy priorities and how to effectively advocate, as well as fostering participants' intent to take further advocacy actions.

After attending AAD events, most participants (94%) reported **learning at least one new concept\*** (N=174).



Nearly all (99%) participants intend to **take at least one action\*** after attending AAD events (N=174).



\*Participants could select multiple responses.

Participants found AAD events to be impactful:



### Community & Connection

"I liked the camaraderie and connecting to people I might have never met... I am looking forward to attending more!"



### Direct Interaction with Legislators

"It was rewarding to be able to meet face-to-face with our State Legislators and speak to them directly about both our personal and professional connection with suicide."



### Personal Impact & Empowerment

"AFSP Advocacy Action Days are one of the most empowering events...It's a unique experience where my voice, my story, and my suicide loss matters."

## What Comes Next

**Building on these findings, AAD events will continue to be strengthened by:**

1. Improving communication flow between staff, volunteer organizers, and event participants to build on event success.
2. Creating a mechanism for chapters to share peer-to-peer knowledge, tips and tricks, and state-specific nuances.
3. Celebrating and reinforcing the importance of chapter leaders' involvement and connecting with diverse communities.